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DOCUMENTS

THE MEDIEVAL AMERICAN CHURCH

Some twenty years ago, the present Bishop of Sioux Falls, S. D., the Right Rev. Thomas O'Gorman, D.D., at that time Professor of Ecclesiastical History in the Catholic University of America, published the first synthetic account in English of the rise and fall of the Church in Greenland.¹ His studies in this little known period of American Church History were based upon two works: the *Flatey Book* (*Flateyjarbok*), issued by the Royal Danish General Staff, in Copenhagen, 1893; and the *Documenta Selecta*, printed in facsimile at Rome in 1893, by J. C. Heywood, as a contribution to the World's Fair of Chicago. At the time of the publication of these manuscripts, American antiquarian lore had attracted the attention of ethnologists, historians, and archeologists in different parts of the scientific world, and had given rise to numerous works having for their purpose the elucidation of what is generally known as the Pre-Columbian epoch of American history.² The manuscripts which Heywood has published from the *Vatican Archives* form almost a complete series of authenticated sources for the history of Norse christianity in America before Columbus. His folio volume containing these documents in photographic facsimiles was a rare work from the beginning, only twenty-five copies being printed. For that reason we reproduce them in these pages in order that all lovers of early Catholic Americana may have them at their disposal.

¹ *The Medieval American Church*, article, in the *Catholic University Bulletin*, Vol. i (1895), pp. 415-427.

² The most valuable contribution to the subject is RAFN, *Antiquitates Americanarum*. Hafniae, 1837. The best account in English is by DE ROO, *History of America before Columbus*. Two volumes. Philadelphia, 1900. Source material on the same subject will be found in the following works: ADAM BREMENSIS, *Historia seu Gesta Hammaburgensis Ecclesiae* (*Monumenta of Pertz, Scriptores*, Vol. vii); BEAMISH, *The Discovery of America by the Northmen*. London, 1841; Id., *Voyages of Northmen to America*, Boston, 1877; BEAUVOIS, *La découverte du Nouveau Monde par les Irlandais et les premières Traces du Christianisme en Amérique avant l'an 1000*, in the *Compte-rendu du Congrès international des Américanistes* at Nancy, 1875; Id., *Origines et Fondation du plus ancien Evêché du Nouveau Monde, le Diocèse de Gardhs en Groenland*, in the *Mémoires de la Société d'histoire, d'archéologie et de littérature de l'arrondissement de Beaune*, 1878; Id., *La découverte du Groenland par les Scandinaves au X Siècle*, in the *Museon* (Louvain) 1892; Id., *Les derniers vestiges du Christianisme prêché du X au XIV siècles dans la Markland et la Grande Irlande*, Paris, 1877; Id., *La Chrétienté du Groenland au Moyen Age*, article in *Revue des Questions Historiques* (Vol. lxxi (1902), pp. 538-82), which sums up all his former studies on Medieval America; RICHARD H. CLARKE, *America Discovered and Christianized in the Tenth and Eleventh Centuries*, article in the *American Catholic Quarterly Review*, Vol. xiii (1888), pp. 211-237; Id., *The Conversion of the Northmen. The First Christian Northmen in America*, articles in the *ACQR*, Vol. xiv (1889), pp. 487-504; 598-615. CRANZ, *History of Greenland*, London, 1820; DE COSTA, *The Pre-Columbian Discovery of America by the Northmen*, 3d ed., Albany, N. Y., 1901; FISKE, *The Discovery of America*, New York, 1902; GRAFFAREL, *Etude sur les Rapports de l'Amérique et de l'Ancien Continent avant Christophe Colomb*, Paris, 1869; GRAVIER, *Decouverte de l'Amérique par les Normands au X siècle*, Paris, 1874; JELIC, *L'Evangélisation de l'Amérique avant Colomb*, Paris, 1891; REEVES, *The Finding of Wineland the Good*, London, 1890; WINSOR, *Narrative and Critical History of America*, Boston, 1869. The best bibliography on the subject will be found in JOSEPH FISCHER, S.J., *The Discoveries of the Norsemen in America with special relation to their early cartographical Representation*. Trans. by B. H. SOULSBY. London, 1903.

I

The "Omnium Fidelium" of Gregory IV

A. D. 835

(Greenland and Iceland placed under the See of Hamburg)

The first document in which the names Iceland and Greenland occur is in the Apostolic confirmation by Pope Gregory IV, in the year 835, of the erection of Hamburg into an archepiscopal See, having jurisdiction over all Scandania. This document has been attacked as wholly spurious by Lappenberg, Klempin, and Dümmler, while other writers admit its authenticity but hold that the words *Greenland* and *Iceland* are interpolations.³ A strong point in favor of the Bull is the number of confirming documents from the Papal See between 835 and 1133.⁴ The imperial rescript issued by King Louis the Pious, on May 15, 834, gave to the whole church of Scandania an ecclesiastical organization and nominated St. Anschar (801-865), the "Apostle of the North," as its first Bishop, with Hamburg as his episcopal See.⁵ In conformity with the royal wish, Gregory IV (827-844), issued the Bull *Omnium Fidelium*, the following year (835), appointing St. Anschar to the See and making him papal legate "to all the surrounding nations"—*in omnibus circumquaque gentibus*—namely, to the Danes, Swedes, Norwegians, Finlanders, Greenlanders, Helsingers, Icelanders, etc., etc.

Gregorius Episcopus Servus Servorum Dei, Omnium fidelium dignoscentiae certum esse volumus, qualiter beatae memoriae praecellentissimus Rex Karolus, tempore praedecessorum nostrorum, divino afflatus Spiritu, gentem Saxonum sacro cultui subdidit, jugumque Christi, quod suave ac leve est, ad usque terminos Danorum sive Slavorum, corda ferocia ferro perdomans, docuit; ultimamque regni ipsius partem, trans Albiam inter mortifera Paganorum pericula constitutam, videlicet ne ad ritum relaberetur gentilium, vel etiam quia lucrandis adhuc gentibus aptissima videbatur, proprio episcopali vigore fundare decreverat. Sed quia mors affectum prohibuerat, succedente ejus praecellentissimo filio, Hludewico Imperatore Augusto, pium studium sacri genitoris sui efficaciter implevit.

Quae ratio Nobis per venerabiles Ratolphum sive Vernoldum Episcopos, necnon Geroldum comitem vel Missum venerabilem relata est confirmanda.

Nos igitur omnem ibi Deo dignam statutam providentiam cognoscentes, instructi etiam praesentia fratris filiique nostri Anscharii primi Nordalbingorum Archiepiscopi, per manus Drogonis Metensis Episcopi consecrati, sanctum studium magnorum imperatorum, tam praesenti auctoritate quam etiam pallii donatione, more praedecessorum nostrorum roborare decrevimus; quatenus tanta auctoritate fundatus praedictus filius noster ejusque successores lucrandis fidelibus insistentes, adversus tentamenta diaboli validiores existant, ipsumque filium nostrum jam dictum Anscharium et successores

³ For a complete discussion on the genuinity of the *Omnium fidelium*, cf., DE ROO, *op. cit.*, Vol. pp. 45-67; DE COSTA, *op. cit.*, pp. 25; CLARKE, in the ACQR, Vol. xiv (1889), pp. 598-615.

⁴ These confirmatory documents, especially the Papal Briefs of Popes Anastasius III (912), John X (920), and Innocent II (1133), will be found in the original Latin in DE ROO, *op. cit.*, Vol. ii, pp. 527-43.

⁵ The Rescript will be found in the *Diplomatarium Islandicum* edited by S. L. Møller, Reykjavik 1857, and in DE ROO, *op. cit.*, Vol. ii, pp. 522-25.

ejus Legatos in omnibus circumquaque gentibus Danorum, Sueonum, Northehorum, Farriae, Gronlandan, Halsingolandan, Islandan, Scridevindum, Slavorum, necnon omnium septentrionalium et orientalium nationum quocunque modo nominatarum, delegamus. Et posito capite et pectore super corpus et Confessionem Sancti Petri Apostoli, sibi suisque successoribus vicem nostram perpetuo retinendam, publicam evangelizandi tribuimus auctoritatem, ipsamque sedem Nordalbingorum, Hammaborch dictam, in honore Sancti Salvatoris ejusque intemeratae Genitricis Mariae consecratam, Archiepiscopalem esse decrevimus. Consecrationem vero succedentium sacerdotum donec consecrantium numerus ex gentilibus augeatur, sacrae palatinae providentiae interim committimus. Strenui vero praedicatoris persona tantoque officio apta in successione semper eligatur; omnia vero a venerabili principe ad hoc Deo dignum officium, deputata nostra etiam auctoritate, pia ejus vota firmamus, omnemque resistentem vel contradicentem atque piis nostris his studiis quolibet modo insidiantem, anathematis mucrone percutimus atque perpetua ultione reum diabolica sorte damnamus, ut culmen Apostolicum, more praedecessorum nostrorum, causam Dei pio affectu zelantes, ab adversis hinc inde partibus tutius muniamus.

Et quia te, charissime fili, Anschari, divina clementia nova in sede primum disposuit esse Archiepiscopum, Nos pallium ad missarum solemnia celebranda tribuimus, quod tibi in diebus tuis, uti et Ecclesiae tuae perpetuo statu manentibus privilegiis, uti largimur. Sancta Trinitas vitam tuam conservare dignetur incolumen, atque post saeculi amaritudinem ad perpetuam perducat beatitudinem Amen. (Datum 835).

(Translation⁶)

Gregory, Bishop, servant of the servants of God; to all the faithful be it known that the most excellent Emperor Charles, in the time of our ancestors, being influenced by inspiration of the Divine Spirit, subdued the race of the Saxons to the Christian religion, and imposed upon them Christ's yoke, which is easy; and that he subdued the fierce hearts as far as the boundaries of the Danes or Slavi, by the sword; and that, in order that the part of the Empire lying beyond the Elbe might not, lying as it did between great perils, go back to the heathen religion, or perhaps because it seemed best adapted to the care of nations yet to be gained over, he so decreed to establish it by his own imperial authority. But death having hindered his plans, his son and most excellent successor, Louis the august Emperor, effectually carried out his father's wishes, which cause is to be confirmed to us by the venerable Racobfius or Vernoldus, Bishop or Count Geroldus. Therefore, all of us recognizing in all this an appointment worthy of Divine Providence, and also instructed by the presence of our good Brother Ansgar, the first bishop of the Nordalbingians, consecrated by the hands of Deago Mateasis Bishop, and the holy seal of honored emperors, both by these presents and by the delivery of the Episcopal Pallium, according to the ancient custom of our forefathers, have resolved to confirm by whatsoever valid authority we possess, the said Ansgarius and his successors in office, in order that in winning over the nations they may be the more mighty against the wiles of the Devil, and they are hereby appointed over Legates Apostolic among all the nations round about—the Danes, Swedes, Norwegians, Faroese, Greenlanders, Helsingers, Ice-

⁶ DA COSTA, *op. cit.*, pp. 219-220.

landers, Slavi, as also all the northern and eastern nations of whatever name they may be called, and resting head and heart upon the body of the faith of St. Peter, we give them public authority to preach the Gospel, and to occupy the Episcopal See itself. We decree that the See of the Nordalbingians, called Hamburg, shall be consecrated in honor of the Saviour and His Immaculate Mother as an Archi-episcopal See. And until the number of bishops shall be increased, we commit the consecration of bishops, provisionally, to the care of the Palatinate. But let the person elected for so great an office and apt thereto, always be that of an earnest preacher, that we do by our authority confirm and establish his pious wishes and vows; and everyone who shall resist or gainsay, or in any way counteract these auspicious desires, we do smite with the sharp edge of our anathema and adjudge the guilty by perpetual vengeance to the doom of devils, according to the manner of predecessors in office; and being zealous with pious effort, do all the more safely defend the Apostolic See against all adversaries.

And forasmuch, most beloved Ansgar, the Divine Grace has inclined thee in this new See to accept the office of an archbishop, we do hereby transmit the pallium for your celebration of the mass, which we authorize you to wear during your lifetime.

May it please the most Holy Trinity long to spare your life, and after the bitterness of this transitory state may you obtain eternal felicity. Amen. Datum, 835.

II

The See of Gardar in Greenland was erected in 1125, and with it begins what may be called the Medieval Epoch of American History. From 1125 until the year of the Discovery, 1492, a long line of Bishops rule this far-away northern Diocese. The *Heywood Documents* contain ten papal letters on the subject, and are here given in their proper order.

I

Innocent III to Thoror, Archbishop Elect of Drontheim, February 13, 1206

(Giving Him Metropolitan Jurisdiction over All Scandinavia)

..Nidrosiensi archiepiscopo eiusque successoribus canonice substituendis, in perpetuum. Licet omnibus ligandi et solvendi sit concessa potestas, licet unum preceptum ad omnes idemque pervenerit predicandi evangelium omni creature, velut quedam tamen inter eas habita est discretio dignitatis et dominicarum ovium curam, que omnibus imminerebat, unus singulariter suscepit habendam, dicente ad eum Domino: Petre amas me? Pasce oves meas. Qui etiam inter omnes apostolos principatus nomen obtinuit, et de fratrum confirmatione singulare a Domino preceptum accepit, ut in hoc seculare posteritati daretur intelligi, quoniam, quamvis multos ad regimen ecclesie contingeret ordinari, unus tamen solummodo supreme dignitatis locum fastigiumque teneret, et unus omnibus et potestate gubernandi et iudicandi omnes presideret. Unde et secundum hanc formam in ecclesia distinctio servata est dignitatum, et sicut in humano corpore pro varietate officiorum diversa ordinata sunt membra, ita in structura ecclesie ad diversa ministeria exhibenda diverse persone in diversis aut ordinibus constitute. Aliis enim ad singularum ecclesiarum, aliis autem ad singularum urbium dispositionem ordinatis ac rerum, constituti sunt in singulis provinciis alii,

quorum prima inter fratres sententia habeatur, et ad quorum examen subiectionum personarum questiones et negocia referantur. Super omnes autem Romanus pontifex tamquam Noe in archa primum locum noscitur obtinere, qui ex collato sibi desuper in apostolorum principe privilegio de universorum causis iudicat et disponit et per universum orbem ecclesie filios in christiane fidei firmitate non desinit confirmare, talem se curans iugiter exhibere, qui vocem dominicam videatur audisse, qua dicitur: Et tu aliquando conversus confirma fratres tuos. Hoc nimirum post beatum Petrum illi apostoli et viri, qui per successiones temporum ad gerendam curam sedis apostolice surrexerunt indesinenti curaverunt studio adimplere et per universum orbem nunc per se nunc per legatos suos corrigenda corrigere et statuenda statuere summopere studuerunt. Quorum quoque vestigia subsecutus felicitis memorie Eugenius papa, antecessor noster, de corrigendis hiis, que in regno Norveie correctionem videbantur exposcere et verbo ibi fidei seminando iuxta sui officii debitum sollicitus extitit, et quod per se ipsum, universalis ecclesie cura obsistente, non potuit, per legatum suum Nicholaum, tunc scilicet Albanensem episcopum, qui postea in Romanum pontificem est assumptus, executioni mandavit. Qui ad partes accedens, sicut a suo patrefamilias acceperat in mandatis, talentum sibi creditum largitus est ad usuram et tamquam fidelis servus et prudens, multiplicatum inde fructum studuit reportare. Inter cetera vero, que ad laudem illic nominis Dei et ministerii sui commendationem implevit, iuxta quod predictus antecessor noster ei preceperat, pallem Iohannia antecessori tuo indulsit et, ne de cetero provincie Norveie metropolitani cura possit deesse, commissam gubernationi tue urbem Nidrosiensem eiusdem provincie perpetuam metropolim ordinavit et ei Asloensem, Amatripiensem, Bargensem, Stavangriensem, insulas Orcades, insulas Fareie, Sutrhoie et Islandensem et Grenelandie episcopatus tamquam sue metropoli perpetuis temporibus constituit subiacere et eorum episcopos sicut metropolitanis suis tam sibi quam suis successoribus obedire. Ne igitur ad violentiam constitutionis ipsius ulli unquam liceat aspirare, nos felicitis memorie predicti Eugenii et Alexandri atque Clementis predecessorum nostrorum Romanorum pontificum vestigiis inherentes, eandem constitutionem auctoritate apostolica confirmamus et presentis scripti privilegio communimus, statuentes ut Nidrosiensis civitas supradictarum urbium perpetuis temporibus metropolis habeatur, et earum episcopi tam tibi quam tuis successoribus sicut suo metropolitano obediant et de manu vestra consecrationis gratiam sortiantur, successores autem tui ad Romanum pontificem tantum percepturi donum consecrationis accedant, et ei solummodo et Romane ecclesie subiecti semper existant. Porro concessio tibi palleo pontificalis scilicet officii plenitudine infra ecclesiam tantum ad sacra missarum sollempnia per universam provinciam tuam hiis solummodo diebus uti fraternitas tua debet, qui inferius leguntur inscripti: Nativitate Domini, Epiphania, Cena Domini, Resurrectione, Ascensione, Pentecoste, in sollempnitatibus beate Dei Genitricis semperque virginis Marie, Natalicio beatorum Petri et Pauli, Inventione et Exaltatione sancte Crucis, Nativitate beati Iohannis baptiste, festo beati Iohannis evangeliste, Commemoratione omnium sanctorum, in consecrationibus ecclesiarum vel episcoporum, benedictionibus abbatum, ordinationibus presbiterorum, in die consecrationis ecclesie tue ac festis sancte Trinitatis, et sancti Olavi et anniversario tue consecrationis die. Studeat ergo tua fraternitas plenitudine tante dignitatis suscepta ita strenue cuncta peragere, quatinus morum tuorum ornamenta eidem valeant convenire.

Sit vita tua subditis exemplum, ut per vā cognoscant, quid debeant appetere, quid cogantur vitare; esto discretione precipuus, cogitatione mundus, actione purus, discretus in silentio, utilis in verbo, cura tibi sit magis prodesse hominibus quam preesse. Non in te potestatem ordinis, sed equalitatem oportet pensare conditionis. Stude ne vita doctrinam destituat, nec cursum vite doctrina contradicat. Memento quod est ars artium regimen animarum. Super omnia studium tibi sit apostolice sedis decreta firmiter observare et tamquam matri et domine tue ei humiliter obedire. Ecce frater in Christo karissime inter multa alia hec sunt pallei, hec sacerdotii, que omnia facile Christo adiuvante adimplere poteris, si virtutum omnium magistrā caritatem habueris et humilitatem, et quod foris habere ostenderis intus habebis. Decernimus ergo et c. usque in finem. Dat. Rome apud Sanctum Petrum per manus Ioannis, Sancte Marie in Cosmedin diaconi cardinalis, sancte Romane ecclesie cancellarii, idibus februarii, indictione vj, incarnationis dominice anno M^oCC^oV^o, pontificatus vero domini Innocentii pape iij anno octavo.⁷

(Translation⁸)

Innocent III, to the Archbishop of Drontheim, and his canonically appointed successors in perpetuity: Though the power of binding and loosing was given to all, and although the same common command to preach the Gospel to every creature was laid upon all, a certain distinction of dignity was nevertheless decreed and only one received above all others the care of the Lord's sheep, in accordance with the Lord's words: Peter, dost thou love me? Feed my sheep. It was Peter also who attained to the preeminence above all the Apostles. He received a particular command from the Lord to confirm his brethren, that following generations might know that while many were ordained to govern the Church only one was to hold the supreme power, and be over all the others in authority and jurisdiction. Therefore, in accordance with this plan, a distinction of power is seen in the Church, and even as in the human body the various members thereof are intended for different uses, so in the Church different persons attain to different orders for different services. Some are set apart for particular churches and some are ordained to the rule of different cities, and the arrangement of different affairs. Others are set over certain provinces, others have jurisdiction over their brethren for the disposition of cases that relate to those under them. But over all these, the Roman Pontiff, like Noah in the ark, as holding the preeminence; for he, by virtue of the power granted to him from above in the person of the prince of the Apostles, judges and decides causes, and ceases not to establish in the Christian faith the sons of the church all over the world, by right seeking to prove that he has heard the voice of the Lord, saying: And thou being once converted, confirm thy brethren. The Apostles and men who have risen in regular order to the government of the apostolic see since the blessed Peter, have likewise endeavored with unfailing zeal to perform the same, and either personally or by means of their legates have endeavored to their utmost to correct whatever needed correction and to decree what was required. Our predecessor of happy memory, Pope Eugene, following in their footsteps, was desirous, in accordance with the obligations of his office, to amend in the kingdom of Norway all that seemed to demand amendment, by sowing the word of faith, and what he himself was unable

⁷ Cf. BREQUIGNY, *Diplomata*, Paris, 1791, tom. ii, 2 p., p. 834 and MIGNE, *Patrologia Latina*, tom. ccxv, c. 798.

⁸ DA COSTA, *op. cit.*, pp. 205-6.

to do, on account of his care of the universal Church, he entrusted for execution to his legate Nicholas, then bishop of Albano and afterwards Roman pontiff, who, having gone to that country, loaned out, obedient to the commands of his master, the talent he had received, and like a faithful and wise servant tried to derive an increase thereof. Among other things which he achieved to the glory of God's name and his ministry, according as he had been ordered by our said predecessor, he bestowed the pallium upon thy predecessor John, and lest the province of Norway should lack the direction of a metropolitan he appointed the city of Nidras, now under thy charge, as the metropolitan See in perpetuity of the said province and gave to it as suffrage Sees in perpetuity Aslo, Amatrip, Bergen, Stavangri, the Orkney, Faroe, and Subraie islands, Iceland and Greenland, commanding the bishops of the same to obey him and his successors as their metropolitans. Lest anyone should presume, however, to violate the order of the aforesaid legate, we, after the example of the aforementioned Eugene, of happy memory, of Alexander and of Clement, our predecessors and Roman pontiffs, confirm the same order by apostolic authority, and by this ordinance ordering that the city of Nidras be ever considered as the metropolitan See of the aforementioned cities; that their bishops are to obey thee and thy successors as their metropolitan, and to receive from thy hands the grace of consecration; that thy successors, however, are to come to the Roman pontiff alone, in order to receive the grace of consecration, and that they are to be subject to the Roman Church alone. Besides, thy fraternity will use the pallium which has been given thee, the emblem of the fullness of the pontifical office, within church only during the solemn celebration of mass throughout thy whole province, and on those days only which are underwritten, viz., the Lord's nativity, the Epiphany, the Lord's Supper, the Resurrection, Ascension and Pentecost, on the festivals of the blessed Mother of God, Mary, ever virgin; the feasts of Saints Peter and Paul, the finding and exaltation of the Holy Cross, the nativity of St. John the Baptist, the feast of blessed John the Evangelist, on the commemoration of all saints, when consecrating churches or bishops, blessing abbots or ordaining priests, on the anniversary of the consecration of thy own church, the feasts of the Holy Trinity and of St. Olaf and the anniversary of thy consecration. Wherefore let thy fraternity do all things with diligence that the ornaments of thy administration may be in keeping with the fullness of the great dignity thou hast received. Let thy life be an example to all who are under thee, so that they may learn therefrom what they should seek after and what they are obliged to shun; be distinguished for thy prudence, chasteness of thought, purity of conduct, discretion in silence, usefulness in speech. Endeavor rather to do good to men than to rule them. In thyself thou shouldst consider not the power of order, but the equality of thy condition. Take care lest thy life render void thy teaching or thy teaching prove in contradiction to thy conduct. Remember that the government of souls is the art of arts. Strive above all things to observe faithfully the decrees of the apostolic see, and humbly obey the same as thy mother and mistress. These, most beloved brother in Christ, are some among the many obligations which pertain to thy archiepiscopal and sacerdotal office, all of which thou canst easily perform with Christ's aid, provided that thou hast charity, which is the mother of all virtues, and humility, and that thou hast inwardly what thou seemest outwardly to have.

Accordingly we decree, etc., unto the end.

Done in Rome, at St. Peter's, by the hand of John, cardinal, deacon of St. Mary's in Cosmedin, chancellor of the holy Roman church, on the thirteenth day of February, the sixth indiction, in the year of the Lord's Incarnation 1205, and the eighth year of the pontificate of Pope Innocent III.

2-5

John XXI to Archbishop John Rufus of Drontheim

(December 4, 1276)

(Tithes, Peter's Pence)

2

.. Archiepiscopo Nidrosiensi. Tua nobis fraternitas intimavit, quod, cum tibi collectio decime Terre Sancte in regno Norwagie per litteras apostolicas sit commissum et in litteris ipsis contineatur expresse, ut omnes partes eiusdem regni debeas propter hoc personaliter visitare, idque quodammodo impossibile videatur, cum Gardensis diocesis, que de tua provincia et regno existit eodem, a metropolitana ecclesia adeo sit remota, quod de ipsa ecclesia illuc propter maris impedimenta vix infra quinquennium ire quis valeat et redire ad ecclesiam supradictam, ac ideo dubites, quod adhuc infra temporis spatium ad solutionem ipsius decime constituti apostolicum sive tuum ad partes illas non valeat pervenire mandatum; postulasti super hoc per apostolice sedis providentiam remedium adhiberi. Cupientes igitur, ut collectioni eiusdem decime sollicitis studiis intendatur, volumus et fraternitati tue per apostolica scripta mandamus, quatinus, si premissa veritas comitetur, aliquas personas ydoneas et fideles, super quibus tuam intendimus conscientiam onerare, ad partes illas destinare procures, que ad executionem collectionis eiusdem diligenter invigilent et intendant aliasque super hoc providere studeas, prout utilitati eiusdem decime videris expedire; nichilominus ad collectionem huiusmodi per te ipsum operose sollicitudinis studium impensurus, ita quod proinde tibi a Domino premium compares et sedis apostolice gratiam uberius merearis. Dat. Viterbii secundo nonas decembris, anno primo.

(Translation⁹)

John XXI to the archbishop of Drontheim:

Having received, by apostolic brief, the commission to collect tithes in the kingdom of Norway for the Holy Land, and having been expressly commanded in the same brief to visit in person all the countries of the said kingdom for this purpose, thy fraternity informs us that such visitation seems in a measure impossible, for the diocese of Gardar, which belongs to thy province and kingdom, is so far from the metropolitan see and the difficulties of navigation are so great that five years are scarcely sufficient for the whole journey; therefore, thou hast reason to doubt whether the apostolic mandate or thine will reach the said country within the time named for the payment of the tithes. Therefore, thou hast had recourse to the wisdom of the Apostolic See for a remedy in this matter. We, therefore, in our desire that the collection of the tithes be carefully attended to, do wish and by apostolic letters command thy fraternity, the above facts being true, to appoint certain capable and faithful persons, regarding whom we charge thy conscience, who shall visit that country and shall supervise and diligently superintend the said collection. Thou shalt also carefully provide whatsoever shall seem desirable in the said matter, that thou mayest obtain thy reward of the Lord and merit for thyself more abundantly the favor of the apostolic see.

Done at Viterbo, December 4th, in the first year.

⁹DA COSTA, *op. cit.*, pp. 208-9.

3

Tua nobis et c. usque in regno Norwagie sit commissa per sedis apostolicæ litteras speciales, et in eis contineatur expresse, ut omnes eiusdem regni partes debeas propter hoc personaliter visitare, ac plures dioceses in regno ipso tuaque provincia constitute per maris spatia adeo sint disperse ac intra suos limites dilatate, quod fere infra sex annos et absque gravissimo ecclesiæ tue dispendio partes omnes predictarum personaliter visitare diocesum difficile tibi foret, cum nonnunquam per dietas quinque ac plures etiam te per talia loca procedere oporteret, in quibus ob domorum defectum tecum deferre tentoria cogereris, concedi tibi, ut per easdem dioceses super collectione ipsius decime certos nuntios tuos ydoneos et discretos, mandato apostolico contrario non obstante, deputare valeas postulasti. Nos itaque tua et ecclesiæ tue dispendia evitantes, tibi, ut, si premissis veris existentibus expedire videris, super quo tuam intendimus conscientiam onerare, nuntios huiusmodi per easdem dioceses super ipsius decime collectione deputare valeas, tenore presentium duximus concedendum; volentes nichilominus, ut tu illas ex predictis diocesibus personaliter visites, quas absque magno incomodo poteris visitare, sollicitum studium adhibens circa collectionem decime supradictæ, ita quod exinde premium expectes a Domino, cuius negotium agitur, et favorem apostolicum uberius merearis. Dat. ut supra.

(Translation¹⁰)

By apostolic brief you have received a commission to collect tithes in the kingdom of Norway for the Holy Land, and having been commanded in the same brief to visit in person all the countries of the said country for this purpose, but thy fraternity has informed us that several of the dioceses in that kingdom belonging to thy province are so widely scattered over the sea and so extensive in territory that it would be difficult for thee to visit personally all the districts of the said dioceses within a period of about six years and without heavy expense to thy see, and since thou wouldst have to journey some five or more seasons through countries where, because there are no dwellings, thou wouldst be obliged to carry tents, thou hast asked to be authorized to depute, notwithstanding the apostolic brief to the contrary, certain careful and capable commissaries to collect the tithes in the said countries. Wherefore, in order to spare thee and thy see such expense, we have concluded to allow thee, by tenor of these present, liberty to appoint such commissaries for the collection of tithes in the said diocese, in case the above be according to the facts, and if thou seest fit so to do, regarding which we charge thy conscience. We wish thee, nevertheless, to visit in person such of the aforesaid dioceses as may be possible, without great inconvenience, and to attend to the collection of the said tithes, that thou mayest expect a recompense from the Lord, whose work it is, and mayest more abundantly merit the favor of the apostolic see.

Done at Viterbo, December 4th, in the first year.

4

Intimasti nobis, quod, cum propter nimiam episcopatum diffusionem regni Norwagie, in quo tibi per apostolicas litteras collectio decime Terre Sancte deputate subsidio est commissa, duo collectores iuxta promissionem (*l. permissionem*) apostolicæ sedis in qualibet diocesi ordinati nequaquam

¹⁰ DA COSTA, *op. cit.*, pp. 209-10.

sufficiant ad ipsam decimam colligendam, neo per illos posset comode colligi absque magno profluvio expensarum, tu cum consilio et assensu suffraganeorum tuorum ipsius regni pro huiusmodi utilitate negotii statuisti per rura singularum diocesum plures alios collectores, qui suis laboribus et expensis predictam decimam colligant et collectam statutis temporibus duobus collectoribus deferant, qui sunt in civitatibus deputati, unde nobis humiliter supplicasti, ut eorundem collectorum rularium (*l. ruralium*) labores et sumptus benigna meditatione pensantes, aliquam illis indulgentiam concedere curaremus. Volentes itaque, ut iidem collectores rurales fructum ex suis laboribus et sumptibus consequantur, eis illam indulgentiam impartimur, que ad promotionem negotii Terre Sancte opem et operam exhibentibus est concessa. Dat. ut supra.

(Translation¹¹)

Thou hast informed us that, owing to the great extent of the dioceses in the kingdom of Norway, wherein thou hast been appointed by apostolic letter collector of tithes for the relief of the Holy Land, the two collectors named, with apostolic permission, for every diocese, are not enough for the said work, nor can they perform the matter without inconvenience and very great cost. By the advice and with the assent of thy suffragans in the said kingdom, thou hast appointed for the rural districts of the different dioceses several other collectors, who by their own efforts and at their personal cost are to collect the tithes and then convey them to the two city collectors. Therefore, thou hast humbly besought us to regard the labor and cost to which these collectors put themselves and to grant them some relief; hence, as we desire that these rural collectors may gain some advantage from their labors and expense, we grant them the indulgence which has been accorded to those who by their labors and cooperation further the cause of the Holy Land.

At Viterbo, December 4th, in the first year.

5

Intimasti nobis, quod in regno Norwagie, in quo tibi decime Terre Sancte collectio est commissa, usque adeo vilis esse moneta dinoscitur usualis, quod extra ipsius regni limites in pretio non habetur, quodque in quibusdam partibus dicti regni monete usus aliquis non existit nec crescunt segetes neque frugum alia genera producuntur, sed lacticiniis et piscibus fere dumtaxat vita inibi sustentatur humana. Quare significari tibi a nobis humiliter petivisti, quid de decima, que de lacticiniis et piscibus et moneta predictis colligitur, debeas ordinare. Nos igitur ad ea, que sunt utiliora negotio intendentes expedire videmus, ut, premissis veris existentibus, in aurum vel argentum, prout commodius fieri poterit, huiusmodi moneta et decima convertantur. De monialibus autem et personis aliis regularibus dicti regni, quorum proventus et redditus ecclesiastici adeo sunt tenues et exiles, quod ex illis sustentari non possunt, sed pro habenda vite sue substatione necesse habeant publice mendicare et helemosinas petere, servare poteris, quod in declarationibus super ipsius decime editis plenius continetur. Dat. ut supra.¹²

¹¹ DA COSTA, *op. cit.*, p. 210.

¹² Cf. MUNCH, *Pavelige Nuntiers Regnskabs og Dagbog, forte under Tiende-Opkraevningen i Norden* 1282-1334, p. 143. Christiania, 1864.

(Translation¹³)

Thou hast informed us that in the kingdom of Norway, where thou hast been entrusted with the collection of tithes for the Holy Land, the current money is so debased as to be of no value outside the boundaries of the kingdom, and that in some parts of the aforesaid kingdom money is not in use, also no crops are cultivated, and no fruits are grown, the people living almost entirely upon milk, cheese and fish; therefore, thou hast humbly requested us to tell thee what thou shalt do with the tithes drawn from the aforesaid milk, cheese, fish and money. Therefore, in our thought that whatever is most profitable to be done in this matter, we think it would be well, if the statement be exact, to exchange so far as practicable all such coin and tithes for silver and gold. In regard to the nuns and other religious orders of the kingdom whose incomes and ecclesiastical revenues are so small as to be insufficient for their support, thou canst proceed according to that which has been set forth fuller in the declarations relating to this collection of tithes.

Done at Viterbo, December 4th, first year.

6

Nicholas III to Archbishop of Drontheim
(January 31, 1279)

Venerabili fratri . . . archiepiscopo Nidrosiensi. Ex transmissa nobis nuper tuarum collegimus serie litterarum, quod insula, in qua civitas Cardensis consistit, propter malitiam maris Oceani, infra quod ipsa consistit, raro navigio visitantur; unde, cum nuper quidam naute ad eiusdem insule visitationem tenderent vela in altum, tu huiusmodi oportunitate captata quendam discretum virum, colligendi decimam commisso sibi officio, cum dictis nautis ad civitatem transmissisti eandem, et sub spe nostre ratificationis concessisti eidem, ut clericos ab excommunicationis sententia, quam pro eo quod huiusmodi decimam in statutis super hoc terminis non solverunt incurrerant, absolveret et cum eis dispensaret super irregularitate, si quam proinde forsitan contraxerunt. Quare a nobis humiliter postulasti, ut ratificare benignius dignaremur. Cum itaque huiusmodi postulationi, ut pote que rationis viribus non iuvatur. (*l. iuvatur, non*) acquiescere favorabiliter nequeamus, ac propter hoc cupientes huiusmodi tuis desideriis annuere et animarum periculis per consequens occurrere provisionis remedio salutaris, presentium tibi auctoritate commictimus, ut absolvendi clericos tam in predicta quam aliis insulis maris eiusdem constitutos a predicta sententia iuxta formam ecclesie et dispensandi cum eis super irregularitate huiusmodi libere committere valeas officium hiis, quos propter collectionis ministerium ad predictas insulas destinasti vel forsitan imposterum destinabis. Dat. Rome apud Sanctum Petrum secundo kalendas februarii, anno secundo.

Eidem magistro Bertrando Amalricii.

Dat. Rome apud Sanctum Petrum v idus iunii, anno secundo.¹⁴

(Translation¹⁵)

Nicholas III, to his venerable brother, the Archbishop of Drontheim:

We have learned from thy letters to us, that the island on which the city of Gardar is located is not often visited by ships, on account of the storms of the ocean where

¹³ DA COSTA, *op. cit.*, pp. 210-11.

¹⁴ Cf. MUNCH, *l. c.*, p. 146.

¹⁵ DA COSTA, *op. cit.*, pp. 211-12.

it is situated. Lately, therefore, when certain sailors went to the said island to the said city, thou didst take advantage of the opportunity to send in the company of the said sailors, a careful person, whom thou didst appoint collector of the tithes. Depending upon our approbation thou didst empower him to absolve clerics from the pain of excommunication which had fallen upon them, on account of non-payment of tithes within the ordered time, and to release them from whatever irregularity they may have committed. Therefore, thou hast humbly requested us to grant our gracious approval. But since we cannot favorably assent to this desire because it is not based on reason, and desiring, on this account, to comply with thy wishes by applying a ready remedy for perils to souls, we hereby empower thee to give to those whom thou hast sent or may send in the future to the said islands to absolve clerics, whether in the aforementioned islands or others in the same ocean from the aforesaid sentence according to the order of the Church, and to dispense them from irregularity of this kind.

Done at Rome, at St. Peter's, January 31, 1279.

7

Nicholas III to Bertrand Arnabrie

(June 9, 1279)

Te nuper significante accepimus, quod in cathedralibus ecclesiis in Datie et Suetie regnis constitutis nonnulli redditus devotione fidelium deputati existunt, ex quibus per personam ad hoc specialiter deputatam clericis ecclesiarum infra eadem regna consistentium vinum et ostie annis singulis ministrantur. Quia vero, an de huiusmodi redditibus exigi debeat decima, consultationem a sede apostolica postulasti, nos tuam diligentiam commendantes discretioni tue per apostolica scripta mandamus, quatinus, si proventus ipsi sint adeo magni, quod ministratis vino et ostiis multum ex illis noveris superesse, volumus, quod de illis huiusmodi decima persolvatur; si vero nihil vel parum ex predictis redditibus superesset, nichil persolvatur de ipsis propter reverentiam divini cultus et Domini sacramentum. Dat. ut supra. (Rome apud Sanctum Petrum v idus iunii, anno secundo).¹⁶

(Translation¹⁷)

"Nicholas III, to the said Master Bertrand Arnabrie:

We have recently been told by thee that certain revenues have been apportioned by the devotion of the faithful in the cathedral churches of Denmark and Sweden for the express purpose of buying wine and altar bread for the clergy of the churches within the said kingdom. Since, however, thou hast consulted the Apostolic See in regard to whether tithes should be taken from revenues of this kind, while approving thy diligence, we do by apostolic letter leave the question to thy judgment, in order that, if the revenues be so large that thou art sure that a large sum will be left over after providing wine and altar bread, we wish that tithes be paid on that part. On the other hand, if little or nothing is left of the said revenues, nothing is to be paid out of regard for reverence for adoration and the sacrament of the Lord.

Done in Rome, at St. Peter's, June 9, 1279."

¹⁶ Cf. MUNCH, *l. c.*, p. 150.

¹⁷ DA COSTA, *op. cit.*, p. 212.

Martin IV to Archbishop of Drontheim

(March 4, 1281)

Venerabili fratri . . . archiepiscopo Nidrosiensi. Tua nobis fraternitas intimavit, quod decima, que in Islandie et Feroyum insulis in regno Norwegie constitutis in diversis rebus persolvitur, que de facili permutari vel pecunialiter vendi non possunt, propter quod decima eadem nequit ad Terram Sanctam vel ad sedem apostolicam comode destinari. Subiuncxisti quoque, quod Gronlandie decima non percipitur nisi in bovinis et focarum coriis ac dentibus et funibus balenarum, que, sicut asseris, vix ad competens pretium vendi possunt. Unde, quid super premissis a te agendum existat, petiisti te per apostolice sedis oraculum edoceri. Nos itaque tue sollicitudinis studium commendantes, consultationi tue taliter respondemus, quod tam insularum quam Gronlandie decimas predictarum in argentum vel aurum, prout melius et utilius fieri poterit, convertere studeas, illud una cum (illa) alia decima in ipso regno collecta pro ipsius Terre subsidio ad apostolicam sedem, quamcito poteris, transmissurus, quid et quantum destinaveris fideliter intimando. Ceterum carissimo in Christo filio nostro . . . regi Norwegie illustri nostras regatorias litteras destinavimus, ut non impediat nec impediri permittat, quin decima ipsa de regno suo libere extrahatur in predictae Terre subsidium secundum apostolice sedis arbitrium disponenda, quodque prohibitionem contra eiusdem clericos regni factam, ne quis laicus ipsius regni sterlingos vel argentum aliud vendere quoquomodo presumat, studeat difficultate summota qualibet revocare. Dat. apud Urbemveterem 1111 nonas martii, anno primo.¹⁸

(Translation¹⁹)

Thy fraternity hast informed us that the tithes being paid in Iceland and the Faroe Islands in the kingdom of Norway, are composed of various commodities that cannot easily be exchanged or sold, on which account the same cannot readily be sent to Holy Land or to the Apostolic See. Thou hast said, also, that the only tithes that can be gathered in Greenland are composed of skins of the elk or the musk ox or of seals, teeth ropes of whales, which by your account, cannot be sold for any fair price. Therefore, thou hast desired instructions of the apostolic see as to what course you should take in this case. Therefore, while we admire thy pious care, we reply to the question as follows: Thou must seek to exchange the tithes of Greenland and the other islands as you best may, for either silver or gold and forward the same as soon as possible, together with other tithes collected in the kingdom for the succour of Holy Land, truly informing us in regard to the nature and the amount of what thou dost send. We also write to our most dear son in Christ, the renowned king of Norway, requesting him not to prevent or permit anyone to prevent the free exportation from his dominion of the tithes which are devoted, as the Apostolic See shall deem fitting to the succour of the said Holy Land, and to seek to repeal the order decreed against clerics of said kingdom, that forbids any layman of the kingdom selling easterlings or other silver.

Done at Orvieto, March 4, 1281.

¹⁸ Cf. MUNCH., *l. c.*, p. 153.¹⁹ DA COSTA, *op. cit.*, p. 212-13.

Nicholas V to the Bishops of Skalholt and Holar in Iceland**(September 25, 1448)***(Ruin of the Diocese)*

Nicolaus etc. venerabilibus fratribus Schaoltensi et Olensi episcopis salutem etc. Ex iniuncto nobis desuper apostolice servitutis officio universarum ecclesiarum regimini presidentes, sic auctore domino pro animarum salute precioso Salvatoris redemptas comertio nostre solitudinis curam impendimus, ut illam non solum impietatis et errorum procellis sepius fluctuantes, sed et erumnis et persecutionum turbinibus involutas ad statum optime tranquillitatis reducere studeamus. Sane pro parte dilectorum filiorum indigenarum et universitatis habitatorum insule Grenolandie, que in ultimis finibus Oceani ad septentrionalem plagam regni Norwegie in provincia Nidrosiensi dicitur situata, lacrimabilis querela nostrum turbavit auditum, amaricavit et mentem, quod in ipsam insulam, cuius habitatores et incole ab annis fere sexcentis Christi fidem gloriosi sui preconis beati Olavi regis predicatione susceptam, firmam et intemeratam sub sancte Romane ecclesie et sedis apostolice institutis servarunt, ac quod tempore succedente in dicta insula populis assidua devotione flagrantibus, sanctorum edes quamplurime et insignis ecclesia cathedralis erecte fuerint, in quibus divinus cultus sedulo agebatur, donec, illo permittente, qui imperscrutabili sapientie et science sue scrutinio persepe, quos diligit, temporaliter corrigit et ad meliorem emendam casgat, ex finitimis lictoribus paganorum ante annos triginta classe navali barbari insurgentes, cunctum habitatorum ibidem populum crudeli invasione aggressi et ipsam patriam edesque sacras igne et gladio devastantes solis [in] insula novem relictis ecclesiis parrochialibus, que latissimis dicitur extendi terminis, quas propter crepidines montium commode adire non poterant, miserandos utriusque sexus indigenas, illos precipue quos ad subeundum perpetue onera servitutis aptos videbant et fortes, tanquam ipsorum tyrannidi accomodatos, ad propria vexerunt captivos. Verum quia, sicut eadem querela subiungebat, post temporis successum quamplurimi ex captivitate predicta redeuntes ad propria et refectis hinc inde locorum ruinis, divinum cultum possetenus ad instar dispositionis pristine ampliare et instaurare desiderent, et quia propter preteritarum calamitatum pressuras fame et inedia laborantibus non suppetebat hucusque facultas presbiteros nutriendi et presulem, toto illo triginta annorum tempore episcopi solatio et sacerdotum ministerio caruerunt, nisi quis per longissimam dierum et locorum distanciam divinorum desiderio officiorum ad illas se conferre valisset ecclesias, quas manus barbarica illesas pretermisit, nobis humiliter supplicari fecerunt, quatinus eorum pio et salutari proposito paterna miseratione cucurrere [*l. succurrere*] et ipsorum in spiritualibus supplere defectus nostrumque et apostolice sedis in premissis favorem impartiri benivolum dignaremur. Nos igitur dictorum indigenarum et universitatis habitatorum prefate insule Grenolandie iustis et honestis precibus et desideriis inclinati, de premissis et eorum circumstantiis certam noticiam non habentes, fraternitati vestre, quos ex vicinioribus episcopis insule prefate esse intelleximus, per apostolica scripta committimus et mandamus, quatinus vos vel alter vestrum diligenti examine auditis et intellectis premissis, si ea veritate fulciri compereritis ipsumque populum et indigenas numero et facultatibus adeo

sufficienter esse resumptos, quod id pro nunc expedire videbitis, quod ipsi affectare videntur, de sacerdotibus ydoneis et exemplari vita preditis ordinandi et providendi plebanos et rectores instituendi, qui parrocchias et ecclesias resarcitas gubernent, sacramenta ministrent et, si vobis sive alteri vestrum demum expedire videbitur et opportunum, requisito ad hoc metropolitani consilio, si loci distancia patietur, personam utilem et ydoneam, nostram et sedis apostolice communionem habentem, eis in episcopum ordinare et instituere ac sibi munus consecrationis in forma ecclesie consueta, nomine nostro impendere et administracionem spiritualium et temporalium concedere, recepto ab eodem prius iuramento nobis et Romane ecclesie debito et consueto, valeatis vel alter vestrum valeat; super quibus omnibus vestram conscienciam oneramus, plenam et liberam vobis vel alteri vestrum constitutionibus apostolicis et generalium conciliorum ac aliis in contrarium editis non obstantibus quibuscunque. Dat. Rome apud Sanctam Potentianam, anno etc. millesimo quadringentesimo quadagesimo octavo, duodecimo kalendas octobris, pontificatus nostri anno secundo.²⁰

(Translation²¹)

“Nicholas, etc., to our venerable brothers, Bishop of Skalholt and Bishop of Holar, Health, etc.:

By virtue of the apostolic charge given to us from on high, in directing the affairs of the universal church, it is our care, in God's name, to secure the salvation of souls purchased by the precious blood of our Saviour, not only by stilling the storms of irreligion and error which sweep over them, but also by protecting them when subject to misfortunes and whirlwinds of persecution. From the natives and from dwellers in Greenland, an island said to be found in the most distant parts of the ocean off the northern coasts of the kingdom of Norway, in the province of Drontheim, a sorrowful cry has come to our ears and saddened our heart. These people, nearly six hundred years ago, received the Faith from the lips of their glorious apostle, the blessed King Olaf, and kept it unchanged and pure, in obedience to the laws of the holy Roman Church and the Apostolic See. After a time animated by unflinching devotion, they built many churches besides a fine cathedral, in which the worship of God was faithfully carried on until within thirty years, by the permission of Him who, in his incomprehensible wisdom and knowledge, afflicts those whom He loves to make them perfect, barbarous people from the neighboring heathen shores sent ships to invade the island. The land was laid waste with fire and sword, churches were everywhere destroyed in all the island, said to be of vast extent. Only nine parish churches escaped, for the reason that being built among the mountains they could not well be reached. Many of the unhappy people of both sexes, who seemed strong to bear the yoke of lasting slavery, and by reason of physical strength appearing best suited for the labors of their masters, were carried away as prisoners. Nevertheless, the same adds, that, after a time, many of them returned to their native country; and having in various places rebuilt what the invaders had destroyed, they wished to establish the worship of God and restore its former splendor. Nevertheless, the misfortunes endured had left them in such a starving and necessitous condition, that they had no means of supporting a bishop and priests, and unless in their desire for Divine worship they could perform a journey of a number of days to the churches

²⁰ Cf. *Grönlands historiske Mindesmaerker*, tom III, pp. 164-74, Copenhagen, 1845, UNGER og HUITFELDT, *Diplomatarium Norvegicum*, tom. VI, n. 527. Christiania, 1864.

²¹ DA COSTA, *op. cit.*, pp. 214-16.

that had survived the destruction of the barbarians, they were without the comforts of a pastor and the services of priests for thirty years. Therefore, they have most humbly besought us, that, in our paternal pity we would give them aid in satisfying their devout and beneficial desires; also that we would condescend to meet the supply of their spiritual needs and exhibit our benevolence and that of the Apostolic See in this case. Therefore, moved by the proper and rightful prayers and wishes of the aforesaid natives and dwellers in Greenland, and not having perfect knowledge of the above facts and circumstances, we do, by apostolic letters, command one or both of you, whom we understand to be neighboring bishops, after having carefully investigated and comprehended the statements made above, to learn if it be true. If the is the state of things and if you find the population increased in number and resources to render the fulfillment of their desires expedient, it is our will that you ordain suitable priests of holy life and furnish rectors for the administration of the parishes that have been restored and churches for the administration of the sacraments. In addition, if to one or both of you it may seem timely and expedient, having sought the advice of the metropolitan, if the distance allows, we empower you to appoint and order as bishop for them some profitable and qualified person in communion with us and the Apostolic See, to consecrate, with the customary form of the church, in our name, and give to him the administration of spiritual and temporal things, first receiving from him the proper and usual oath of allegiance to us and the Apostolic See. Having made this a matter of conscience, we by our apostolic authority, give to one or both of you full and unrestricted jurisdiction in this case, according to the tenor of these presents all statutes and constitutions, whether apostolic or of general councils, or of any other kind whatsoever, notwithstanding.

Done at Rome, at St. Potenciana's, in the year 1448, twelfth day before the Kalends of October, the second year of our pontificate."

10

Alexander VI on the See of Gardar

(1492?)

(The Appointment of Bishop Mathias, O.S.B.)

Cum, ut accepimus, ecclesia Gardensis in fine mundi sita in terra Gronlandie, in qua homines commorantes ob defectum panis, vini et olei siccis piscibus et lacte uti consueverunt, et ob id ac propter rarissimas navigationes ad dictam terram causantibus intentissimis aquarum congelationibus fieri solitas navis aliqua ab ottuaginta annis non creditur applicuisse, et, si navigationes huiusmodi fieri contingeret, profecto has non nisi mense augusti congelationibus ipsis resolutis fieri posse non existimentur; et propterea eidem ecclesie similiter ab ottuaginta annis vel circa nullus penitus episcoporum vel presbyterorum apud illam personaliter residendo prefuisse dicitur; unde ac propter presbyterorum catholicorum absentiam evenit, quam plures diocesanos olim catholicos sacrum per eos baptismum susceptum pro dolor regnasse [*l. remegasse*], et quod incole eiusdem terre in memoriam christiane religionis non habent nisi quoddam corporale, quod semel in anno presentetur, super quo ante centum annos ab ultimo sacerdote tunc ibidem existente corpus Christi fuit consecratum; hiis igitur et aliis consideratis considerandis, felicitis recordationis Innocentius papa VIII, predecessor noster, volens dicte ecclesie tunc pastoris solatio destitute de utili, de ydoneo pastore providere, de fratrum suorum consilio, de quorum numero tunc eramus, venerabilem

fratrem nostrum Mathiam, electum Gardensem, ordinis sancti Benedicti de observantia professum, ad nostram instantiam, dum adhuc in minoribus constituti eramus, proclamatum ad dictam ecclesiam summopere ac magno devotionis fervore accensum pro deviatorum et renegatorum mentibus ad viam salutis eterne reducendis et erroribus huiusmodi eradicandis vitam suam periculo permaximo sponte et libere submittendo navigio etiam personaliter proficisci intendentem, eidem episcopum prefecit et pastorem. Nos igitur eiusdem electi pium et laudabile propositum in Domino quam plurimum commendantes sibi in premissis aliquo subventionis auxilio propter eius paupertatem, qua, ut similiter accepimus, gravatus existit, succurrere cupientes, motu proprio et etiam ex certa nostra scientia de fratrurn nostrorum consilio et assensu, dilectis filiis rescribendario, abbreviatoribus necnon sollicitatoribus ac plumbatoribus illarumque registratoribus ceterisque tam cancellarie quam camere nostre apostolice officialibus quibuscumque sub excommunicationis late sententie pena ipso facto incurrenda committimus et mandamus, ut omnes et singulas litteras apostolicas de et super promotione dicte ecclesie Gardensis pro dicto electo expediendas in omnibus et singulis eorum officii gratis ubique pro Deo absque cuiuscunque taxe solutione seu exactione expediant et expediri faciant omni contradictione cessante; necnon camere apostolice clericis et notariis, ut litteras, seu bullas huiusmodi dicto electo absque solutione seu exactione alicuius annate seu minutorum servitiorum et aliorum iurium quorumcumque in similibus solvi solutorum [*l. solutorum*] libere tradant et consignent, motu et scientia similibus ac sub penis predictis committimus et mandamus, in contrarium facientes non obstantibus quibuscumque. Fiat gratis ubique quia pauperrimus.²²

(*Translation*²³)

A letter of Pope Alexander VI, 1492-1493, by which he appointed Matthias, a monk of St. Benedict, to the Bishopric of Garder, Greenland. The entire volume, 492 pages, is of paper, and the documents seem to have been written carelessly by a rapid hand, except a few by a firm and careful hand in an older style. We have placed Matthias with the titular bishops, yet such was not the intention. Matthias was fully resolved upon the mission.

"We learn that the church of Goder [Garder] situated on the outer boundaries of the world, in the country of Greenland, whose inhabitants are accustomed to live upon dried fish and milk, for the reason that bread, wine and oil are scarce, and for the reason that voyages are rarely made to that region, on account of the freezing of the sea no ship is supposed to have touched there during the past eighty years. We are also informed, that voyages of this kind are not thought possible except in the month of August, after the ice melts, and that no resident bishop or priest has ruled the Church for some eighty years past. Therefore, on account of the lack of priests, it has come to pass that very many of the people of that diocese, who were formerly Catholics, have, alas! denied the sacred baptism they had received. It is said that the people of that land have no other relic of the Christian religion than a corporal that they exhibit once a year, upon which the body of Christ was consecrated by the last priest who was resident one hundred years ago. On account of these and other reasons, our predecessor, Pope Innocent VIII, of happy memory, desiring

²² Cf. JELIC, *L'évangélisation de l'Amérique avant Christophe Colomb* in the *Compte-rendu du Congrès Scientifique Internationale des Catholiques*, tom. V, 183. Paris, 1891.

²³ DA COSTA, *op. cit.*, pp. 216-17.

to furnish an able and meritorious pastor for the said church, so long deprived of that consolation, agreeable to the advice of his brethren, of whom we were one, nominated to the said see, our venerable Brother Matthias, a professed member of the Order of St. Benedict and now bishop-elect of Gader [Gardar] having been preconised on our motion, before an election.

In his intense zeal for those who had fallen away for the recovery of those who have lapsed, and for the suppression of error, he has now resolved to set out upon this most dangerous undertaking. While greatly commending, in the Lord, his holy and meritorious design, we wish to aid him in some means on account of his poverty. Therefore, on our own doing, cognisance and by the advice and consent of our brethren, we direct, under penalty of excommunication, to follow *ipso facto*, our beloved sons, the copyists, abreviators, solicitors, with the holders of seals, and the registerator, and all other officials in the various offices, both of the chancery and apostolic chamber, to forward and to have forwarded promptly and entirely free of charge, all apostolic letters concerning the advancement to the aforesaid church of Gader [Gardar] which need to be sent to the said bishop elect. Moreover, by the same, with similar cognisance and similar penalties, to be visited upon those who incur, who fail to obey, and everything to the contrary notwithstanding, we command the clerics and notaries of the apostolic chamber to give to the said bishop all such briefs and bulls without payment or requirement of any tax or any fees or gratuities ordinarily paid on similar accounting. Let all be done free in all the departments, because he is very poor."

These Documents constitute a valuable group of original sources for the story of the Norse suffragan See of Gardar. Their contents show that the Roman authorities had an intimate knowledge of the Church in Greenland; and an examination of the Archives of Rome and of Drontheim may prove the existence of many more manuscripts on this subject.
